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# Joshua Kaplan '11: Brown should force students to think green

**By:**

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It is wonderful that the University is spending its resources reducing emissions and committing to a future of LEED certified buildings. But Brown is small and therefore any changes in emissions are also small.

For Brown to have a significant impact beyond the university community, it must make students think green.

The University is doing something about its environmental impact. Specifically, Brown is making current facilities use 42 percent below 2007 green house emission levels by 2020. Making conservative assumptions about future growth, Brown will go from 6,686 homes to 3,878 homes - a difference of 2,808 homes. Or Brown goes from 11,391 cars to 6,606 cars - a difference of 4,785 cars.

Those savings describe my suburban town - albeit fewer homes and a few more cars. Those values were for homes or cars, so Brown will save about half the emissions of a smallish suburban town. Assuming of course Brown is not going to keep on building new facilities, which of course it will.

The blunt truth is that while Brown is making a serious attempt to reduce its greenhouse emissions, all of Brown's efforts will be canceled out by a few new dozen subdivisions

Brown can make an impact far larger than its own environmental impact by making us, the students, green in thought. We already have one program that does this in a small way - PAW Prints. It is simple and effective. Every time you print at a library, you are reminded of how much money you have already used up. It is not perfect, however, because it does not say how many pages you have printed so far or the carbon dioxide or tree equivalent.

Nevertheless, it is better than what happens when you turn on the light in your room - absolutely nothing. Chargers for your cell phone and laptop, along with an alarm clock and a lamp or two are plugged into your dorm room's outlets. Perhaps you have a microwave, refrigerator, TV, game console, or hair dryer. The point is that you have no idea how much energy you are using.

I want to shove your energy usage in your face. For the moment, individuals can keep their flat fee of electricity use that is included in the room fee. The University should hook up sensors to the outlets and the light in each room and put up a nice display that can show current, daily and past electricity usage.

This is a two part process.

First, start simple. Make one of the Grad Centers a test bed by wiring each room, all singles, with sensors and a display. The display should show that room's energy use and compare it with the average use of each room in the dorm at that moment. The specific comparisons could be different, what is important is making students aware. If this program is popular, we should incorporate more dorms.

Taking it one step further, go back to the original grad center dorm and make it a test bed once more. Now that we know range of student energy usage, we could charge students to use an especially high amount of electricity.

Conversely, we could reward people who use an especially low amount. Either way, we can use incentives to make students pay attention. Even if the environmental impact is low, the mental impact is huge.

This program will be expensive, but then so is cutting green house emissions and constructing LEED certified buildings. It will not reduce energy consumption very much, but that is not the point.

This innovation keeps energy efficiency on everyone's mind-and graduating a thousand and a half students each year with green on their minds will spread the environmental impact far beyond Brown's community.

**Joshua Kaplan '11 thinks it's not easy being green.**

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